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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Thursday, September 19, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WOOL OUTFITS FOR FALL." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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At this time of the year, mothers, and their daughters, too, are thinking about wool dresses or suits daughter will wear at school this fall. And as Shakespeare might have put it, they are wondering,--

"To sew or not to sew,-- that is the question:
Whether "tis better in the end to struggle
With pins and patterns, to make coats and dresses,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,-
Buy ready-made and end them."

Ay, there's the rub, as Hamlet said. But Clarice L. Scott, clothing specialist of the Bureau of Home Economics, says that if you choose simple styles that are suitable for woolen fabrics, and if you use care at each stage of the making, you can often produce winter garments for less than you would have to spend on something similar ready-made. You will have a fabric and color you like, in harmony with the rest of your wardrobe. And garments that have been carefully cut and fitted are likely to wear well and keep their attractive appearance more than one season.

Here are some general points Miss Scott mentions about making women's and girls' wool garments at home:

To begin with, don't choose too heavy a material for a dress that will be worn indoors in a modern heated house or class-room. The very heavy weight wool fabrics and fuzzy, thick materials are better for suits or coats worn out of doors. There are sheer wools, light weight flannels, and other less heavy wool fabrics that are much more comfortable indoors.

Find out, if you can, whether the material has been thoroughly sponged and preshrunk by the manufacturer. If the material has not been preshrunk, it will be worth while to steam and shrink it yourself. In a moment I'll tell you how to do this.

Ask also about sunfastness. Since woolens are usually worn for more than one season, guarantees against fading are desirable.

Now about choosing your pattern. If you are interested in a business-like costume for everyday wear, select a tailored style, with fairly straight lines, made of crisp wool since these woolens tailor neatly. You can set off such a dress with rows of machine stitching or saddle stitchery, or with some simple trim as buttons or stud sets. The so-called "classic" shirt-waist styles make up well in light-weight flannels, gabardines, and crepes, with pleated or gored skirts.

However, woolen skirts should never be bulky. A style with a few pleats may look well, but for the person who sits a great deal, like an office worker, or one who drives a car, a six-gore skirt with a comfortable flare is a better choice.

For an afternoon dress of one of the light-weight wool crepes or voiles, you would want a corresponding style, with somewhat soft lines, and possibly drapery or gathers. Even in the sheer wools, don't forget that crowded gathers and puckers are dust catchers, good breeding places for moths, and very hard to press well.

When you start to make the dress, remember that good fit and good workmanship are very important. Fit the shoulder seams first, placing the seam so as to make your posture appear to best advantage. Don't allow the shoulder seams to extend too far out, so that the sleeves droop off. Fit the armhole carefully. Then see that the waist-line is pulled in snugly enough so that the top of the skirt stays in place. This is of particular importance now that waists are slightly bloused. One way to keep the waist-line looking trim is to anchor your belt at the center front by means of a little worked loop to slip over the belt buckle prong, in addition to the belt holders at the underarm seams.

Woolen dresses require precise and accurate cutting and workmanship. When you make seams on woolen materials, use wide seam allowances and pink the edges, or overcast them. You don't want any finishes that will leave a lump when you press them. Above all, pressing at different stages of construction is important. For example, press finished pockets then baste and stitch them in place, while the front section of the dress is flat. When you have stitched side and shoulder seams, press them open immediately on a sleeve board or covered broom handle before putting in the sleeves or joining the waist and skirt. Baste and press pleats of any sort as you go along. When the garment is finished it will need very little further pressing.

Use silk ribbon binding along the edge of hems and facings to give the flattest finish possible. You can get bias silk binding for curved edges.

Plaids and checks are rather difficult materials to make up because the design must be very carefully matched everywhere on the dress. A plaid square on one side of the front must be matched by the same square on the other side of the front, and if there is a pocket, its lines should continue the plaid design unless the pocket is set crosswise or diagonally for contrast. The line of the design must also be carried across the sleeves at the same level as on the front of the dress. If the skirt has gores, each gore should have the plaid design at the same level. This matching up entails some waste in cutting, so buy a little extra material to allow for it.

Miss Scott has a great many other ideas on making fall school clothes, but time's about up, and with these suggestions, you can undoubtedly go ahead.

Oh, yes -- I promised to tell you how to sponge and shrink woolen yard goods. Well, lay the material on a smoothly padded table, cover with a clean, thick, dry press cloth, such as an old sheet or flour sacks. And then with another cloth wrung out of hot water, press all over the material with a moderately hot iron. Don't press until the material is bone dry. Beat steam out of the material with a clapper or use the flat of your hand. This avoids a hard pressed look.

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